



Marketing fashion through storytelling – success factors and inhibitors

Abstract

An even increasing amount of fashion brands are engaging in market activity called storytelling. The idea behind this act is to attract consumers through compelling content marketing. In this research I will detail both the success factors and the inhibitors of storytelling and their effectiveness in attracting new customers as well as retaining current customer base in fashion market. The findings suggest, that using storytelling can have a positive impact on fashion company's revenues as well as brand status. In the fashion industry, stories enable companies to engage with their customers through shared values, resolve their paradoxes and provide them pleasure.

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1. Intro

1.1 Motivation for the research and background

Even though the positive impact of storytelling has been widely studied across different marketing areas, only few fashion brands have been known for elevating their brand value through this tool (Mc Kinsey, 2020). Nike is one of these brands. Their campaign in 2018 featuring Colin Kaeperick, was fully based on a meaningful story, proving that what they are selling is not just a product - they sell aspiration (IQUII, 2018). Even though the campaign created great controversy, the result of using a story in their ad spoke for itself: The company gained a 6 billion dollar brand value increase and a 31% growth in their sales (Edison trends, 2018). This proves, how stories can be successfully used in fashion marketing in order to trigger fashion consumption and more importantly elevate the brand value.

McKinsey, The State of Fashion 2020, informed that fashion industry will face a difficult time during the following years not only due to disrupted financial markets, decreased consumer demand and tangled supply chains, but also because of the economic crisis resulted by the COVID-19. The discretionary nature of fashion industry makes it extremely vulnerable to these changes and McKinsey report announced that the average market capitalization of apparel fashion have dropped nearly 40 percent between the start of January and March 24, 2020. This is a noticeably steeper decline compared to other industries (McKinsey analysis, based on data from S&P Capital IQ). This change in demand has created an urgent need for new ways of targeting consumers, for which storytelling offers a potential solution.

One of the main characters of fashion market is that it is constantly undergoing transformation as trends and consumers preferences change rapidly (Aspers, 2010). Therefore, it is known as one of the highly competitive industries (McKinsey, 2020). With the ever changing needs of the consumers, marketers in fashion industry have to focus on constant innovation and new ways to engage with people in order to fulfill their demands and bring revenues. This is where storytelling comes in as an effective tool to differentiate fashion brands from the others and create value to consumers through editorial elements embedded in their marketing acts (Oswald, 2012). Telling stories enables companies to create emotions in consumers, which gives them a sense of engagement and also a better understanding of the brand's values. In addition, storytelling can be utilized through various media to introduce the brand in new ways, which is beneficial considering the fast changing digital environment of the 21st-century (Rickman, & Cosenza, 2007). As brand communications based on emotional appeals created by stories are known to be more persuasive and memorable, than rational appeals, marketers could benefit from shifting their focus on this area (Woodside, 2008).

Storytelling has long been studied as an effective way to achieving richer understanding of consumer psychology (Holt D. B., 2004). People relate to each other, as well as to products and brands through storytelling. It is no wonder, since storytelling has been shown to be a fundamental human experience that drives people together (Adaval, R., & Wyer, R. S, 1998). In this research I will specifically focus on the brand and product communication aspect of storytelling. Brand communications via narrative elements have been studied to encourage consumers in deeper communication with the brand's offerings and eventually led to higher revenues through increased purchasing drive (Holt, 2004; Woodside, 2008). The storytelling element can be clearly visible in brands marketing or appear as an inferred narrative. In today's

fragmented media world, it can be seen as a main tactical tool, that allows consumers to have a different entry to the brand- through engagement. By using narrative elements to communicate the brand's content, marketers are able to elevate the value of their brand and better explain the brand meaning to their customers (Jung 1916/1959; Hiltunen, 2002; Nataraajan & Bagozzi, 2000). In addition, people learn better through stories, since it is more memorable as a learning process (Roger C. Schank, 1977). This makes it a powerful tool for marketers to gain knowledge about their brand's market place and its consumers.

1.2 Research objective and questions

This research, on marketing fashion through storytelling, comprises information gathered from literature reviews focused on both fashion marketing and storytelling. The aim of this study is to bring together different viewpoints and knowledge on these two areas. As a result, the objective is to give guidelines on, how to effectively use the success factors of storytelling in order to create meaningful and impactful fashion marketing acts. Existing research has been done widely on both sides, storytelling and fashion marketing. However, a research gap exist, where there is no clear guidance on the implications of storytelling into company's existing fashion marketing strategy. Therefore, this research will provide new information on theoretical as well as managerial implications on, how to prosperously link these two areas together.

The main research questions this study aims to answer are: Should fashion marketers use storytelling in their marketing activities? How should they use storytelling to successfully market their products? The main purpose of the research is therefore to contribute to the already existing debate on the effectiveness of storytelling and moreover to bring new insight to its usefulness in marketing fashion. Kelley and Litmann (2006) discuss, that when using storytelling we create

positive emotions with consumers and are able to increase brand trust more effectively than with facts. This aspect of making the brand feel unique and raising its awareness is one of the reasons it could be utilized in the extremely competitive fashion market where knowing your consumer and engaging with them is more important than ever (McKinsey, 2020; Solomon & Douglas, 1985).

The fashion industry has faced some drastic changes during the last decade, from digitalization to the increased power of the customer (Medium, 2019). Many marketing tools currently used in this industry are simply not meeting the new and ever changing demands of consumers (McKinsey, 2020). With the increased amount of transparency and decreased intermediaries, companies have possibility for direct connections with millions of consumers. In order to win consumer engagement in these new circumstances, brands must success in relating consumers to their values and creating meaningful content that feels personal to them (Woodside, 2008). This is where storytelling can help: it provides a powerful way for fashion brands to create compelling content that hook people in (Burns, Mullet & Bryant, 2020).

More research is needed on considering the possible options storytelling has to offer in the field of fashion. The content in this paper goes beyond the idea of providing marketers with only the pros of storytelling. I will also discuss the inhibitors of it and provide sound suggestions on, how these aspects should be taking into consideration in both theoretical and managerial implications. In order to do this, I first will describe in detail the different aspects of the fashion industry as a marketing environment and also include knowledge and different aspects of success factors and inhibitors of storytelling. I use literature review as a method to combine knowledge from existing papers and to provide new insight into this field of marketing.

1.3 Course of the investigation: Discussing the structure of the thesis

The paper is organized as follows. First, I will create a theoretical framework by describing, what fashion marketing is and more precisely by defining aspects of effective fashion marketing. Second, I will go through the fundamentals of storytelling as a marketing tool by describing its core meaning and most importantly the reason it should in most cases be used in marketing. In the fourth section the focus is on bringing the two together, fashion marketing and storytelling, with the aim to provide new and sound information on, how to successfully include storytelling in one's marketing actions, when working in fashion industry. I will in this section go deeper in discussing the success factors and inhibitors of storytelling. This section will in addition provide the means through which these success factors can be achieved. Finally, I will conclude by discussing the theoretical contributions of this paper as well as the limitations of this research and suggestions for further research.

2. The marketing of Fashion

The following sections will focus on the marketing of fashion. In section 2.1 I will define the fashion industry and discuss its main characteristics as well as the changes that has occurred in this market area during recent years. Section 2.2 discusses the main aspects of effective fashion marketing and the specific trends the marketers should focus on in the 21st-century. Finally, section 2.3 entails literature review of the main motivations' individuals have to consume fashion.

2.1 Defining the fashion industry

Fashion industry is a highly competitive and globalized market, worth \$2.5 trillion in 2019 (Maloney, 2019). However, the year 2020 is predicted to be a worrying year for the global economy due to broader macroeconomic uncertainty, COVID-19 pandemic and political convulsion across the globe. The fashion industry is expected to suffer from this economic crisis significantly. The McKinsey Global Fashion index predicts the global fashion industry to contract by 27 to 30 percent in 2020 year-on-year (McKinsey&Company, 2020). This dramatic shift in fashion industry creates a demand for rewiring of the fashion system. McKinsey emphasizes especially the importance of changing strategies based on the shifts of the consumers' mindsets. This requires new forms of marketing, for which storytelling may offer a possible solution (McKinsey&Company, 2020).

The fashion industry is devoted to the business of making and selling apparel as well as accessories (Major & Steele, 2019). The term, fashion industry, is broad - encompassing the design, manufacturing, distributing, retailing and marketing of all types of fashion goods (Entwistle, 2015). It includes a wide range of subsegments, from precious haute couture gowns to everyday t-shirts sold in high-street. Fashion products are classified as specialty goods by the classification of goods by the American Marketing Association (1960). This is due to the fact that they are something that carry an importance factor to the consumer as well as requires a substantial amount of effort invested when purchasing it (American Marketing Association, 1960).

The fashion industry can also be described as a part of a larger cultural phenomenon - the fashion system. This entails not only the business part of fashion, but also the art and craft of fashion as well as the consumption aspect of these products (Barthes, 1983). In this sociocultural

system the individual consumer plays as important role as does the fashion designer (Cartier, 2013). What happens in-between the designing of the product and eventually consumers purchasing act, is the marketing of the fashion brand, which contributes to, how customers think about their fashion products (Godart, 2012). This can be seen to be the most crucial work of the fashion system. Failing to communicate the brand's values and meanings often means failing to succeed in this competitive environment (McKinsey, 2020). Fashion is a complex phenomenon, extending to both societal and cultural issues, and therefore companies need careful and rigorous examination of dominant trends and attitudes in this environment in order to create meaningful and compelling content that will make them stand out (Godart, 2012).

Multiple factors, that the designer cannot control, are involved in the process of changing the current fashion and creating new trends. We can subdivide them into innate and external factors (Zhang & Kim, 2012). Innate factors occur naturally as an end result of wanting new variation. A simple example could be the change of jean trends. If skinny jeans have been the number one model for a while, fashion industry craves change and as a result, mom jeans became the dominant model. What creates the complex and unpredictable nature to fashion industry, are the external factors. These factors may include historical events, swings in economic and movements (Ciarniene & Vienazindiene, 2014).

With such a range of factors moving this multi trillion dollar industry, it is no wonder, that the fashion industry often involves conflicting issues (Cartier, 2013). Fashion reflects and pushes cultural, as well as social boundaries, often leading to controversial situations. Therefore, the industry has had multiple moments of being rocked to its core throughout its history (Wong, 2019; Lee, 2003). A good example of this is the mass of press reports about the exploitation in

the industry, including illegal child labor and other unethical or - ecological factors involved in the making of fashion (UIA, 2019).

This challenging characteristic of fashion market creates not only difficulties, but also opportunities. In the modern age, companies have to highlight, how one can consume fashion in a way that is not only good for the individual, but for the entire society (McKinsey, 2020). In order to do this, communication is key. When a brand successfully communicates where it stands in these conflicting sociocultural situations, it will gain the trust of people and stand out in a positive way. Specially the growing and valuable segments of millennials, have been studied to value brands, that take stand on societal matters, such as women rights (Niinimäki, 2009; Kaiser, 2012). This has made the once exclusive and reserved fashion houses into platforms of discussion and action.

One of the other main characteristics of the fashion industry is in fact its fast paced adaptation to new consumer trends and needs (McKinsey 2020; Kaiser, 2012). Even the term fashion is described as a style that is popular “at a particular time” (Cambridge Dictionary, 2020). Leading fashion houses bring constantly new trends to the market. However, the added power of consumers have led to the situation in which companies themselves are longer the only ones determining, what is in fashion and what is not (Easy, 2009; Wilberg, 2018; McKinsey, 2020). In the past fashion was a highly centralized industry, meaning that trends were created and modified by only the most powerful fashion houses. Now, after the emerge of internet and most importantly social media, decentralizing of this industry has happened. This means that trends originate from multiple sources and is not only influenced by the monopoly of fashion magazines or high end fashion houses. Fashion in the twenty-first-century is profoundly influenced by celebrities, influencers, popular culture and most importantly consumers

themselves (Wilberg, 2018). Therefore, it is necessary to have a direct communication with these masses of consumers. Effective marketing is in key position in order to create true connections with consumers and eventually form a profitable business model (McKinsey, 2020).

In the following section I will especially focus on this marketing aspect of the fashion industry. I will discuss the essential of creating an effective marketing strategy in fashion system and provide a detailed description of all the factors, impacting one's consumption behavior when buying fashion products.

2.2 Effective fashion marketing

Marketing refers to all activities the company does in order to promote and eventually sell products and services to consumers. Fashion marketing therefore entails, the entire process of managing the flow of merchandise from the initial design stage of the products to the presentation of them to the consumers (Easey, 2009). The ultimate goal in the complex and multistage process of marketing fashion is to find the most effective way to deliver desired satisfaction to the valuable target group. The many activities of marketing include product development, pricing, promotion, distribution and finding the right targets. Marketing fashion successfully requires careful planning and coordinating (Kaiser, 2012; Easey, 2009). Simply put, in order to profit, fashion house needs a product that will offer ultimate value and feel desirable to the customer and more importantly present it to the right customers in the most appealing way.

In the early days of fashion industry, companies were more concerned about, what is economic and easy to produce. However, since marketing appeared to be so effective in other industries, such as health and car industry during the 60's, fashion managements started to focus on it more (Bartels, Shaw & Tamilia, 1962). The biggest change was the role of a consumer in the

industry. In the contemporary word of fashion, customer has become the most important factor in successful fashion retailing (Wilberg, 2018; Kaiser 2012; Easey 2009). Therefore, finding the right target group for brand's products and having a rich understanding of their needs and wants is the essential of a powerful fashion marketing strategy (Holt, 2003). Advanced marketing techniques, including data mining, market segmentation, market analysis, focus groups and surveys as well as constant valuation of current marketing acts, has led to better understanding and analyzing of customers tastes. With the help of these techniques, every step, from design to promotion is geared with customer in mind.

The first and arguably one of the most important steps of effective fashion marketing is to define company's value proposition to the brand, which is the value the company wants their customers to receive from their marketing offerings (Holt D. , 2003). This value is never an objective measure of, how much customer values firm's offerings. It is rather shaped by the subjective understanding and visions of the customers themselves. The brand, as Holt describes it is the product as it is experienced and valued by the customer in their everyday lifestyle. By branding their fashion offerings, companies can shape the perceived value of their offerings. This is crucial in fashion industry, since consumers don't buy into products with utilization or only prize in mind- they are buying into the brand and more importantly into the values and meanings that the brand carries (Burns, Mullet & Bryant, 2020). In the globalized and highly consumer oriented 21st-century, not only consumers adopt the values that they see created by fashion brands, but also the brands themselves starts to reflect the values of influencing customers (McKinsey, 2020). This way they can attract their customer base more effectively by providing them content that is in line with their own beliefs. In the contemporary age of fashion, the current dominant trends are sustainability and transparency (McKinsey, 2020). Consumers

demand more and more purpose driven companies that do business that clearly reflects their own values. This means that customers requires brands to be open about their product cycle and more importantly to take stand on current sociocultural as well as environmental issues, such as diversity and climate change.

In order to create an interesting value proposition to the customer, companies need to first have a rich understanding of their current needs and wants (Holt, 2003). The fashion products one carries reflect individual's personalities, lifestyles and values. Therefore, many reasons affect the decision making process of purchasing these goods (Solomon & Douglas, 1985). I will next discuss, what motivates these choices.

2.3 Motivations to consume fashion

To better understand and target fashion consumers, marketers need to concentrate on complementary approaches, innovation theory and self-concept theory (Evans, 1989). Innovation theory, introducing new products and ideas, is important because newness is still seen as the biggest concern and goal of fashion houses. Self-concept theory, comprising the collection of attitudes people hold towards themselves, on the other hand has always had a strong place in fashion consumption, as people often use the material provided companies in order to project their self-images- how they see or would like to see themselves (Solomon, 1996; Goldsmith, Moore & Beaudoin, 1999). Solomon states, the piece of clothing has a noticeably impact in the exhibition of self, and therefore should be the main focus, when studying consumer behavior among this market. It is in key position of understanding consumer behavior in this industry also, since self-perceptions motivates behavior and therefore give direction to consumers' performance. In addition, self-concept influence, how customers view marketing acts, such as

advertising and eventually interact with the provided stimulus. Marketers must therefore learn sufficient amount of information about these people in order to find the best ways to market their offering (Woodside, 2008; McKinsey, 2020).

There are multiple psychological factors that help marketers understand, what motivates consumers to buy fashion. These typically include the desire to belong to a certain group, conformity and on the other hand, the need to seek variety (Sproles, 1985). One can also choose a fashion item based on the willingness to use it to present personal creativity or to gain sexual attraction (Solomon & Douglas 1985). In addition, uniqueness has always been a big criterion for consumers when consuming fashion, especially in the case of more upscale brands. Through digitalization and globalization, fashionable products are no longer available for only the few wealthy clients, but for the whole world interested in it through new channels (McKinsey, 2020). Once something is seen on the catwalk of a luxury fashion house, the trends move quickly to high street brands and can be worn by masses of people. The consumer, who wants to stand out with their style must therefore seek uniqueness through maybe personalization or limited edition models in order to have different, but still trending style. In the contemporary age of fashion, what you wear, tell other people important messages about who you are (Solomon M. , 1988). Therefore, marketers should carefully study what their target groups wish to message through their style and offer products or product lines that will fulfill these needs.

In addition to the psychological factors, economic factors also play a big role in consumers decision making process. This entails the variables, supply and demand. It is studied that items with limited supply, also known as limited edition category or haute couture collections, tend to have high value in the eyes of consumers (Balachander, Subramanian & Stock, 2009). This comes down to many psychological factors, like the uniqueness as described

earlier. When something is scarce, it is seen as a possibility to increase one's status, since rare items carry prestige and respect in the eyes of other people (Balachander, Subramanian & Stock, Axel. (2009). On the contrary, mass produced ready-to-wear products are viewed as less desirable. However, it is important to consider other factors that also impact the demand curve in addition to the mass of supply. Pricing in fashion industry is in great position in creating status and increasing brand's perceived value in the eyes of the consumers. Instead of reflecting what people want, pricing must be determined to mirror, who people want to be (Roger, 2019). The prestige exclusivity effect happens, where high prices are seen as a promise of good quality and increased status. In this case, high prices create high demand, regardless of the supply factor. The opposite, snob effect, happens when prices that are considered low by the consumers actually reduce the demand. Not only in fashion, but also among other industries, cheap is often associated with low quality and decreased prestige (Abdelnour, 2019).

In fashion industry, many sociological factors drive the change in consumer behavior. It is no wonder, since fashion processes affect different types of cultural and social phenomena. A German sociologist and philosopher, Georg Simmel, offers a trickle-down theory to state the sociological force that drives change in fashion and most importantly in consumer preferences. This model first includes subordinate groups, who adopt status symbols from the group of consumers above them, known as the superordinate. The motive of climbing up the stairs in the social mobility is the driving force in the act of copying the style of the upper classes. As the dominant style, consumers want to copy, originates from a selected and usually a small group of people. In the contemporary age of fashion these people are usually referred as the influencers. Another force in this model is the drive for newness among the superordinate groups. They observe subordinates in order to make sure, their style is not being overly copied and eventually

becomes mass. In order to avoid this and to distance themselves even more from mass, they need to adopt new trends quicker than others or even create them their selves (Simmel, 1904).

As the literature reviews in this section show, fashion is an extremely multidimensional market with complex variables influencing its direction. It is therefore crucial for marketers to have suitable tools and methods to market the right kind of products to the right segment in the most effective way. Since customers value transparency and direct communication with brands the most, talking to the customers can be seen as one of the most powerful ways to create value. In the following sections, I will describe in detail what communication using narrative elements, known as storytelling, is and, why it is especially suitable tool to answer the struggle of failing to engage with consumers in this difficult and complex industry.

3. Storytelling as a marketing tool

In this section, I will focus on discussing storytelling as a marketing tool. Section 3.1 entails an overall definition of storytelling as well as a more specific description of it as a marketing tool. Section 3.2 will provide knowledge on, why individuals are motivated to tell and listen to these stories.

3.1 Defining storytelling

Every culture has its own definition of a story and therefore it's difficult to give storytelling one straightforward definition. However, common agreement lies on the definition that storytelling always involves the presentation of a narrative (Fog, Budtz, Munch & Blanchette, 2010; Labov & Waletzky, 1967). Another characteristic of storytelling is that it must involve at least a two-

way interaction- between the storyteller and listener. This gives storytelling its immediate and powerful nature (Jacobs, 2002; Chatman, 1978). It has no barriers between the giving and receiving end, which makes it possible to create direct and tight connection between the audience and the teller. Stories don't have to be shared in a specific form, rather they can spread orally, in a written form or even visually through images (Green & Brock, 2000). What more, in storytelling, the listener has a specific role. The listener has a very active role, since the complete story forms in their mind and is unique and personalized to each and every individual (Ochs & Capps, 2001). This is due to the fact, in addition to the presentation of the story itself, other unique factors, such as individual past experiences, understanding and attitudes, play a role in how they create the story in their mind (Zaltman, (2003); McClelland (1988)).

In the context of marketing, storytelling has a different and more specific definition, but it still entails the main characteristics as mentioned earlier. As a marketing tool, storytelling process starts with first making a connection with the consumer and only second comes the selling of the products or services (Woods, 2008; Adaval & Wyer, 1998). This is what makes storytelling different from most marketing tools and specially advertising programs that focus on having the selling aspect on the front line. In marketing, storytelling puts story in the spotlight and the offering is in the background. A story, created through a skillful manuscript writing, has the power to not only tightly connect the consumer, but to also to enforce the brand's value, status and trust in the eyes of people (Holt, 2004; Escalas & Stern, 2003). Typically, successful stories have a steep incline or decline in their plot. The ones alternating these plot twists are the ones that often interests audience the most and most importantly evoke some type of emotion in them (Delgadillo & Escalas, 2004). The necessity for a story to work this way in marketing, typically requires it to have two different dimensions (Bruner, 1990). First, the visible

dimension, which entail all the vents visible by sight to the audience. Second, as Bruner (1990) describes the landscape of consciousness, in contrary is formed by individuals own imagination and empathizing with the characters. In addition, stories should entail one or more archetypes, in which consumers can identify themselves. (Holt, 2003; Hirschman, 1986; Woodside & Chebat, 2001). A commonly used example of archetypes is the Siren, which entails emotions of attraction and desire (Woodside, 2008). This archetype can be seen used in many stories, such as perfume campaigns in order to feed consumers need to enact to specific types (Richard Alan Miller, Iona Miller, 1990).

In specific, consumer storytelling research has concluded that for a marketing message to be a story, it has to include elements: causality and chronology (Delgadillo & Escalas, 2004). In stories, actions occur over time and the events are organized in temporal time dimensions, which gives stories their specific structure, where events are evaluated over time (Escalas & Stern, 2003). In marketing, stories allows causal inferencing to happen by organizing the core elements, such as actions and scenes, into a form, in which relationships between brand's products and the audience are established (Delgadillo & Escalas, 2004) .

3.2 The fundamental need for stories lies in human nature

Many consumers in the 21st-century have a great motivation to report their lived experiences, feelings and attitudes through different platforms (Kluth, 2006; Woodsidee & Chebat, 2011). This is studied to be due to our initial feeling of pleasure, that is achieved when consciously or unconsciously using storytelling to make sense of different situations and creating connections with others (Kluth, 2006; Weick, 1995). Telling stories is inherently pleasurable to humans for many reasons.

First, they offer a relief in many tension rich situations (Weick, 1995; Hiltunen, 2002). Stories enable people to enjoy the nostalgia of past experiences and therefore give the opportunity to live those events again. This provides individuals often with a better understanding of that specific event and gives them clarity to the situations experienced in the past (Schindler & Holbrook, 2003). Stories can therefore be used in expressing emotions, such as anger and love, to relief tensions experienced in one's mind. Studies have shown, that people understand the world mostly in terms of stories that they have been previously been exposed to and understood (Hiltunen, 2002; Weick, 1995; Wells, 1989). It therefore makes sense that individuals use stories to explain others the old, previously experienced stories. Holt's (2002) report on why brands cause trouble, studied the impact of stories in human's everyday life. This study's findings support the theory, that human nature tend to use stories in order to solve dilemmas they encounter, not only in everyday life but also in unique contexts, as reported in the study. This is why telling or listening to stories gives not only pleasure butt also relief to people.

Second, stories actually affect human brain in more persuasive way than facts do, thereby making them more impactful to people (Stephens, Silbert & Hasson, 2010). A study, conducted by group of neuroscientists in Princeton University, showed that hearing facts affects he data processing center in the human brain, whereas stories activates the sensory centers (Stephens, Silbert & Hasson, 2010). This means that people respond better to stories than facts, since they cultivate emotion and creates sense of belonging. The study further discussed, that when listening to a well-structured story, the listener experiences same emotions and levels of understanding as does the storyteller. This is why a successful story makes the audience feel like they are experiencing the event themselves, giving stories great power to connect people deeply.

Another study conducted by a group of neuroscientists also showed the same impact on

human brain when listening or reading to stories (Zack, Kurzban, Matzner, 2005). This study focused on the chemical level changes in our body when receiving stories (Paul J, 2015). The results showed an increase in human's oxytocin levels. Oxytocin is known as the “bonding hormone”, that causes a deep sense of empathy in people, making them care more about others. This is why sharing stories is a fast way to create connections and should be used in marketing more. The increased oxytocin makes people live the experience told in narrative form themselves in their minds the very second the story enters their brain sensors. The same study also found, that the more a unit, whether a person or a brand, shares their stories and let people listen to them, the more oxytocin is released in the brain of a listener. This makes them even more likely to get that story in a deep form of memory and eventually will be more often in their minds. This is why repetition is key when starting to use storytelling in marketing.

In addition, humans have been reported to describe their lives not only through lived experiences but in the 21st-century through narratives that include products and brands (Woodside & Chebat, 2001). Thereby, people have an innate tendency to assign roles, actions and also relationships to brands in the forms of stories (Fournier, 1998). This enables people to experience and to enact archetypal myths, which is the core element in giving pleasure to human mind. In this paper I will use the term archetype to describe an unconscious primary form in the human mind (Rapaille, 2004; Wertime, 2002). They are in our own DNA and cannot be learned later in the life (Wertime, 2002). Rapaille (2004) stated that the learning and internalization of archetype has to occur in the early stages of life in order to form an unconscious pattern. Jung (1916/1959) defines archetypes as forms or images that people experience in their lives all over the earth as constituents of myths or as people's origin of unconscious imagination. These archetypal images entail a wide range of globally recognized

symbols, such as mother nature (Jung, 1916/1959). Consumers are studied to have these archetypal thoughts in their own stories, which proves their meaningfulness in this context (Hirschman, 2000). It is therefore one of the main goals of storytelling usage in marketing: to aid consumers' conscious or unconscious identification with the archetypes through brand stories.

What more, as mentioned earlier in this paper, stories are built in episodic time frame. Tulving (1985) studied the impact of this in our memory system and found out that stories impact our episodic memory strongly, which allows humans to have additional capacity of retention of knowledge about their previous experiences as well as temporal relations. In addition, it provides human brain with the ability to travel back in time by revisiting those lived events mentally. Therefore, using stories in marketing allows brands to have discussion with the consumers in much deeper level and often on the unconscious side of the brain with a long lasting impact in consumers mind. This makes storytelling a powerful tool in persuading for action (McKee, 2003; Wells, 1989; Stern, 1994).

4. Using storytelling in fashion marketing

In this section, I will discuss in detail the implementation of storytelling into fashion marketing strategy and provide suggestions for managerial implications. First, I will briefly discuss, in the section 4.1, the reason, why storytelling should be used in fashion marketing. Section 4.2 describes the success factors of storytelling in fashion context and section 4.3 the inhibitors of effective implementation of stories into one's marketing strategy. Finally, section 4.4. will bring together the findings from section 4.2 and 4.3, providing suggestions on, how storytelling can

successfully be implemented. I will introduce 4.4.1, 4.4.1 and 4.4.3 as means through which the success factors can be achieved.

4.1 Reasons for using storytelling in fashion marketing

Fashion industry has faced multiple changes during the last years, which have in turn changed the way it should be marketed (D'souza, 2016; Smulders, 2017; Mc Kinsey, 2020). The two main game changers have been digitalization and globalization (Mc Kinsey, 2020). Social media's power, advanced manufacturing, changing demographics as well as the raised awareness among consumers are just a few examples of the factors, that have led to significant changes in all aspects of fashion market.

Increasingly, consumers now want to know more information about the piece of clothing they purchase. It isn't good enough to say the country of origin. Consumers are more and more valuing transparency and with the new democratic platforms of social media, people are eager to find out more about the brand they are buying from (D'souza, 2016; Smulders, 2017; Mc Kinsey, 2020). For this reason, fashion brands are turning their focus on transparency and sustainability, in order to meet new customer needs (McKinsey, 2020). This is crucial in order to keep up in the highly competitive global market of fashion. In the contemporary age of fashion, companies has to adapt to the fast changing consumer tastes and expectations. These changes have created new challenges, opportunities and trends. All of which require new, or at least modified, marketing actions (Mc Kinsey 2020; Easey, 2009). Companies have to think digital-first, react quickly to changes, meet the demand for sustainability and transparency and also have the courage to change their old ways of marketing in order to win new generations. In order to achieve this, storytelling is a useful tool (Burns, Mullet & Bryant, 2020).

Content marketing and social media are deemed to be the most powerful tools in successful fashion marketing in the 21st-century, both areas in which storytelling should play the main role (Wiedmann, Hennis, Langer, 2010; Mc Kinsey 2020; Easey, 2009). They are the platforms, where modern consumers communicate with the brand. It isn't good enough anymore for brand to only provide customers with beautiful pieces of fashion. People most of the time do not only buy fashion, because it is beautiful or trendy. They pay much more attention to, what is the story behind that product (Solomon & Douglas, 1985). A brand's story is just as important, or arguably even more important to the customer than the product itself. Buying fashion item is used as an extension to individual's values and lifestyle. This is why selling stories, is often more effective than selling products in this industry (Holt, 2004; Escalas & Stern, 2003; Solomon & Douglas, 1985). Stories has become an immersive way to communicate with consumers 24/7. For fashion houses it is a powerful tool to increase loyalty and eventually sales and therefore should be used as an essential tool to drive their values to people (Holt, 2004; Escalas & Stern, 2003, Woodside, 2008).

4.2 Success factors

Storytelling is a powerful marketing tools as it enables us to breathe life in to the brand and to give the products and services an identity, therefore making brand as a whole much more engaging to the consumer (Tulvin, 1985; Weick, 1995; Fournier, 1998). Storytelling is a big part of emotional branding which has the potential to increase customer retention, bring new customers and also increase revenues (Nataraajan & Bagozzi, 1999). It is no wonder, since the way people feel about the brand often determines, if they are actually going to purchase their products or services (Keller, 2003). This is especially important when consumer is purchasing

non-necessities, such as fashion or luxury products. In this chapter I will discuss the main success factors, storytelling can offer to the fashion industry.

4.2.1 Engagement

One of the main reasons why storytelling should be a priority for marketers is its power to engage customers (Delgadillo & Escalas, 2004; Weick, 1995). By communicating the brand value through stories, companies can better elevate their brand meaning and give an intangible image on, how the customer can fit these values and meanings into their lives with brand's tangible offerings (Arnould & Wallendorf, 1994; Moore, 1985; Woodside & Chebat, 2001). After all, stories are rooted deeply in human nature. Storytelling is a fundamental human experience that has driven humans to for deeper connections throughout our history, which makes it a compelling way for individuals to share and receive information (Escala & Stern, 2003; Holt, 2004; Hiltunen, 2002). A great example of this in the 21st- century is the blogging phenomena. Not only through weblogs, but also using other platforms such as discussion forums or social media, consumers are able to share their own experiences, attitudes and options, regarding to their everyday life. They are therefore seen as individuals own stories (Kluth, 2006). By creating social roles and stories for brands in these commercial websites, companies can make consumers have greater interest and attention towards brand's offerings (Natarajan & Bagozzi, 1990).

4.2.2 Power to store more information

Second, stories often carry greater amount of information than a non-narrative context would (Fournier, 1998; Holt, 2003). Not only do they inform consumer about the brand offerings and their values, the experience of watching, retrieving and telling stories gives the consumers opportunity to experience one or more of the archetypes as mentioned in the section 3.2. This enriches their experience with the specific fashion brand and enforces the person-to-brand connection as there is now something much stronger than just a tangible product keeping this relationship together (Jung, 1916/1959; Holt, 2003). In marketing context, this gives the benefit of consumer remembering a specific brand for a longer period of time through the narrative content than they would with traditional messages (Holt, 2004; Tulvin, 1985). As Wertheim (2002) describes, archetypes are embedded in human nature in the same way as our DNA, making them a powerful tool to use when persuading consumers.

In addition, all humans have paradoxes in their minds and those are the tricky ones for marketer to understand and to tackle. By doing more research on storytelling, marketer can get a better understanding of, how people resolve these triggers in their minds and how fashion brands could help to solve this problem and resolve the feeling of unease (Wegner 2002). With the power of entailing greater amount of compelling, memorable and moving information, stories are a useful way of communicating, that the brand's offerings are a solution to give ease to consumer's paradoxes.

4.2.3 Pleasure provider

The role of fashion marketing should be to aid consumers' continuous quest for this happiness by giving them new incentives (Kotler, Armstrong, Aadam & Denize, 2014). Stories are an effective way of achieving this, as they play a crucial role in enabling consumers to feel

happiness through proper pleasure experience (Jung 1916/1959; Hiltunen, 2002; Nataraajan & Bagozzi, 2000). People often don't have a clear picture of, what truly makes them happy or gives them even transient pleasure (Nataraajan & Bagozzi, 1999). Since people make sense of outcomes, events and self by telling stories or relating to them, stories should be used by the brand to clarify customers, why their products are what they desire and what gives them joy (Tulvin 1985). In other words, stories informs fashion consumers about, how the brand can help them to achieve this pleasure and enable them to experience or even physically enact a specific archetype (Jung 1916/1959; Hiltunen, 2002). If a consumer feels, that the brand can increase their happiness with their offerings, it often increases the willingness to purchase brand's products and services or at least make the brand more memorable in their minds for further interactions (Arnould & Wallendorf, 1994; Moore, 1985; Woodside & Chebat, 2001).

4.2.4 Sense making

The human nature always seeks clarity and sense, as Tulving (1985) describes, whether concerning prior events or outcomes from their selves or others. Stories are a powerful way to clarify these incidents, through providing individuals with narrative context illustrating different events and different archetypes (Weick, 1995). This gives people something to lean on when in plea for clarity. Sensemaking after all is one of the fundamental needs of human nature (Weick, 1995). By framing the unknown within the lines of stories, people can understand and attribute better. Marketers can therefore offer consumers clarity through stories and specify, why their fashion goods offer solutions to their issues, enables them to emphasize with archetypes or simply give pleasure to them.

4.2.5 Icon brand status

Lastly, as discussed in section 3.2, stories with compelling characters, known as myths, help consumers to understand the world they live in better (Holt, 2003). Thereby, brands that allows consumers to experience these myths, can be seen as icons in the eyes of the consumers (Fournier, 1998; Rapaille, 2004). If a brand becomes icon, it is viewed as a crystallized form of a myth (Holt, 2003/2004). This often leads to increased purchasing as now consumers see these brands as a method to receive myths in a tangible and more accessible form (Rapaille, 2004). Icon brands are typically luxury brands like Chanel, or other globally admired brands that deliver universal values. Stories help to clarify and make noticeable the distinctive codes that eventually make brands into icons. (Fournier 1998; Hirschman, 2000). These codes usually mirror ideologies, such as being a rebel or posh, that are summarized in myths. Eventually people become drawn into some of these myths that reflect their own values and therefore become more interested in the brands that are redeemed as icons (Tsai, 2006).

4.3 Inhibitors to successful storytelling

In this section, I will discuss the main inhibitors there are to successful storytelling. The main focus in this paper is in the inhibitors that obstruct the success factors from working in fashion companies. The main issues that prevent companies from utilizing storytelling in their everyday marketing are deeply rooted in fundamental human attitudes and behaviors.

4.3.1 Failing to understand listener's changed needs

One of the mistakes companies can make when implementing storytelling, is failing to know, what consumers want to hear, care about and know about (Holbrook, 1995). This often due to the bias, of already knowing everything about their consumers and making assumptions based on that often outdated information (Woodside, 2006). A research, conducted by Ganz Marshall (2011), described this inhibitor as inertia- operating by habit and not paying attention. He discussed that people are often drawn into old habits and process incoming information in automatized way, thereby responding to the new data as programmed to previous information. In implementing new tools, in this case storytelling, focusing on old ways leads to missed opportunity or even worse, a failed marketing act.

In case of storytelling, this often comes up as using too analysis focused storyline with little emotions or giving no possibilities for consumers to enact with archetypes. This makes the message feel like a logical argument, instead of emotionally connecting narrative content (Bruner, 1990). The problem in question often occurs, when there is incorrect or deficient amount of knowledge about brand's target group and due to inertia, which means that the new information hasn't been received effectively. If a marketer doesn't conduct a sufficient amount of consumer research by collecting data about their behaviors and needs, the story can often remain as just another unimpactful piece of advertisement (Holbrook, 1995). Instead of having a brands spirit and values speaking the voice of the modern audience, these failed stories often only provide basic content strategy. In order to create a successful story, companies must conduct a lot of research in advantage. Combining not only data, but also emotion and empathy is what truly makes a narrative content work.

4.3.2 Making the brand or the product the hero

The second inhibitor to storytelling also comes down to the failure to connect with the consumers. In this case, the reason being is having the wrong hero in the story itself. As mentioned in the section 3.1 each and every story share similar elements of plot. These elements always include a hero or a protagonist, who plays the role at the center of the storyline. The inhibitor to effective storytelling is often having the brand as the hero. It is important to note that brand storytelling is not about the product or service itself. It is a tool to help consumers accomplish different archetypes and offer them values and meaningful information that not only provides pleasure, but also clarifies their self-concept (Jung 1916/1959; Hiltunen, 2002; Woodside, 2008). Marketer should think the fashion brand as a mentor, who enables individuals to realize, what makes them happy and offering them solutions for needs and wants. This doesn't happen by putting the product on the frontline, but rather through offering context that gives consumers something more deeply valuable and memorable. A story, featuring relatable characteristics, is emotionally gripping and that is, what matters in storytelling (Jung 1916/1959; Hiltunen, 2002; Holt, 2003; Natarajan & Bagozzi, 2000).

4.3.3 Being inconsistent

The third inhibitor is being inconsistent with both values and the amount of content a brand publishes. The story, as discussed earlier in section 3.2, should sum the all of the main values and promises the brand carries. The values and attitudes rooted in to the storyline, is what usually attracts consumers at the first place. They don't come after a product, rather they are drawn into values they themselves share with the brand (Natarajan, R., & Bagozzi, R., 1999; Bruner,

1990). The storytelling process is not limited to the content only, but also entails the narrative outside of the content itself, which includes other's perceptions as well as their self-images that effect, how the story is seen and analyzed in the listeners mind (Woods, 2008; Adaval & Wyer, 1998). If brand is inconsistent with the values they share through their stories, consumers won't last. They will look for other companies that share their beliefs and stick with them, since these brands provide pleasure and clarity through shared values between the brand and the customer on a regular basis. By suddenly changing values in stories, in case of targeting new segments for example, brands can, in the worst case scenario, not only fail to target new costumers but also pass the needs of current customer base (Meyers & Gerstman, 2000; Punyatova, 2014).

Another inhibitor considering inconsistency has to do with timing. Especially in the fast-paced digital platforms, such as Instagram or Twitter, feeding the listeners with new narrative content is crucial (Meyers & Gerstman, 2000). As the study by Paul J (2015) showed, repetition is key, in order to actually connect with consumers in the deeper level. Not only is this due to the increased oxytocin hormone resulting in the greater feeling of engagement with the brand, but also because consumers in the 21st-century demands a flow of information. If a brand won't post regularly in their Instagram feed for example, consumers get bored and are more likely to change the company they follow and therefore the impact once created through few successful stories would lose their impact (Simpson, 2019). Temporal campaigns may seem alluring to marketers due to their newness and competitive advantage they therefore often entail (Boisvert, 2017). However, in consumers' viewpoint, these offer only a glimpse of the brand itself and makes it hard to relate to in the long term (Fournier, 1998). However, ad-hoc stories may be useful in the short-term marketing, but long-term marketing brings the loyal customer base and eventually steady revenues, making it the one marketer should mainly focus on when

practicing storytelling (Marzo, Iglesias & Riviera, 2004; MacDonlad, 2020; Boisvert, 2017; Regis, 1991).

4.4 The means to achieve the success factors in fashion marketing

In this section I will introduce 4.4.1, 4.4.2 and 4.4.3 as means through which the success factors can be achieved. This section will also provide strategical implications for storytelling in fashion marketing.

4.4.1 Clarifying value proposition through storytelling

Storytelling can offer solution for one of the biggest problems fashion companies are facing in the 21st-century- How to be unforgettable among the mass of sameness (McKinsey, 2020)? By providing consumers with emotional stories, brands can make themselves thoughtful, memorable and easier to identify with in the eyes of the consumers. In fashion context, this is done most successfully when brands values are fixed to not only match company's heritage or style, but also to mirror consumer demands shifts (López-Navarro, Miguel & Lozano-Gómez, Cristina, 2014). In fashion context this is extremely important, since consumers not only adopt the values created by brands, but the brands has to reflect the values currently trending among powerful groups of consumers or individuals, such as influencers (Burns, Mullet & Bryant, 2020).

When clarifying one's value propositions in order to use them as the basis of effective storytelling, fashion houses should focus first on, what is trending in the industry. According to McKinsey's, The State of fashion in 2020, consumers appreciated brands the most that valued sustainability, transparency and immediacy. Therefore, brands' focus should be heavily placed

on these values in order to target the fashion consumer in the modern age (Arch G. Woodside & Monica B. Fine , 2019). Stories can be an effective way to share the brands values and give consumers the desired immediacy, as they are processed in their minds the very second consumer starts to listen or see it (Stephens, Silbert & Hasson, 2010). In addition, the self-concept theory supports this suggestion of using storytelling especially in the process of sharing values with individuals, as it states that people consume fashion often because of the motivation to use the materials provided by fashion house to project their self- images (Solomon, 1996; Evans, 1989).

In addition to the trending values among consumers, fashion companies should also frame their values to fit its heritage. This is proven to be especially difficult for luxury fashion houses (Fionda & Moore, 2009; Morley & McMahon, 2011). They are often stuck with their past image of being the exclusive world behind closed doors, which offers only a glimpse of their story to the larger audience (Kim & Ko, 2010). This once effective strategy has failed to create profits in the age, where transparency is one of the most valuable things in the eyes of fashion consumers (Mc Kinsey, 2020). The company logo and high-end products won't do the trick anymore (Morley & McMahon, 2011). Storytelling provides solution and ease for this very problem by enabling the historical fashion houses to bring their stories to live in cultural and modern language, by expressing not only their heritage values, but also how they participate in the societal and cultural issues (Donzé Pierre-Yves, Wubs Ben, 2019). It therefore enables brand to still emphasize its timelessness while at the same time expressing the changes in brands identity over time. Having the fashion house's founder's spirit as a baseline, but adding elements of modern culture, is seemingly more effective way to attract consumers in the modern fashion culture (Mc Kinsey, 2020; Morley & McMahon, 2011; Kim & Ko, 2010).

Gucci is a great example of a fashion brand successfully combining heritage and fresh content in their stories. The legendary fashion house has put their consumers first and decided to use stories in order to create emotional connections between their brand vision and customers. As a result, the brand gained 50 percent of their sales from millennials during the third quarter of 2017 (Rawal, 2018). Their campaigns, social media platforms and websites are filled with ancient symbols, such as the bees symbolizing nobility in Rome, and common archetypes (Gucci Garden, 2020). Since archetypes are one of the most powerful elements in stories as they reflect the human condition, providing customers with multiple symbols, myths and archetypical characters gives fashion houses opportunity to engage with the consumers in much more intimate level (Holt 2003). Gucci's strategy proves that tapping one of the main motivation consumers have- using fashion items in order to belong to a certain group or enacting with an archetype- is done effectively through vivid stories.

4.4.2 Investing in digital storytelling

Not only does storytelling provide possibilities to offer consumers something unique in form of memorable content, it also enables marketers to have cutting edge when operating in the digital platforms (Rickman, & Cosenza, 2007). Digital content platforms and communities facilitate storage of media content between users and also enables brands to share their content in viral speed (Chaffey, 2019). In social networking platforms brands are closer to their consumers than ever. This brings challenges, since many fashion houses need to shift their content from traditional adverts, like TV or press, to completely new viral platforms (Tiago & Verissimo, 2014). Stories enable companies to do this change effectively for the following reasons.

Firstly, as discussed in section 4.2.2, they entail more information than any factual content would and fits therefor perfectly in an environment, where attention should be won in only a few seconds (Čiarniene, 2014). Digital environment also allows marketers to use multiple ways in sharing stories: images, text, music, videos and even livestream (Chaffey, 2019). Providing consumers with different forms of stories creates greater amount of engagement, as it affects multiple human senses at the same time, making the message more impactful (Krishna, 2012; Haase, Wiedmann & Bettels, 2020).

Oliveier Rousteign gave fashion world a great example of utilizing different platforms, when telling stories to their consumers (Andjelic, 2015). He entered a direct Instagram dialogue between consumers and the brand, creating a direct, intimate and special relationship with people. Why this kind of direct storytelling through online platforms work, is because of its feels natural and direct to the consumers, eventually making them feel more in touch with the deep meaning behind the brand (Donzé & Wubs, 2019; Delgadillo & Escalas, 2004; Escalas, 1998). A research conducted by Belinda Barman in Harvard Business Review (2015), showed that the top ten most empathetic companies in the Global Empathy Index 2015 increased in value more than twice as much as the bottom ten. In addition, they generated 50 per cent more earnings, proving that creating engaging but also relatable content through stories is indeed effective not only status, but also revenue wise. As Wilberg (2018) argued, fashion in the 21st-century is profoundly influenced by also consumers themselves, making these direct dialogues more important than ever. Not only did this have a positive, easy to approach effect on Balmain's image among media users, it also gave people something to talk about, therefore leaving a mark in their minds.

Another factor that makes storytelling a powerful marketing tool in the online platforms is the fact, that it enables companies to provide consumers with a continuous stream of stories with only little cost. Paying TV-channels or press for featuring an ad is not only expensive cost, but also time wise (Watson, 2002; Sheet & Sharma, 2005). After carefully designing main form for brands stories, including their values and rules for making stories consistent in style, companies can now simply download new content in different platforms in little time (Blue Fountain Media, 2020). This enables fashion houses to easily utilize repetitiveness in their content marketing, which as Paul J (2015) showed is key in connecting with consumers in the deeper level.

What more, storytelling offers fashion houses a possibility to build online communities, which are powerful tools in increasing brand status and revenues through shared stories and work especially well to bring people closer in the fragmented industry of fashion (Adjei, Noble & Noble, 2010). Online brand communities are forms based on a set of social relations among individuals with a common admiration towards the brand, making it a place that can spread masses of information and specially brand related stories in no time at all. It enables stories to be shared from both sides, the brand and the customers, making it a bonding platform that offers added identification possibilities for individual, therefore making the brand feel more relevant (Dessart, Veloutsou & Morgan-Thomas, 2015).

4.4.3 Resolving consumer paradoxes

Fashion market is seen as industry with many conflicting issues, giving often hard time for marketers when deciding how to take stand on controversial issues (McKinsey, 2020; Kaiser, 2012). Fashion drives on both conflicting truth-claims as well as conflicting emotion, both happening not only on the conscious level of knowledge, but more likely on the deeper level of unconsciousness (Kaiser, 2012). In other words, people buy fashion because it is for them a way to take stand on societal issues or resolve conflicts in their minds. Kaiser (2012) defines fashion in the modern word as a form of social play for this specific characteristic. This is one of the reasons marketers should rely on storytelling when discussing issues of this kind.

As discussed in section 4.2.4, all humans have paradoxes in their mind. The constant battle in individuals' mind is, how to make sense of these controversies and more importantly, how to determine the values they want to live by (Pecoraro & Uusitalo, 2013; Manchiraju & Sadachar, 2014). For marketers in fashion industry this has long proven to be the difficult part of marketing strategy, since individual's own conflicting attitudes are often hard to understand and therefore to tackle. However, by doing research on storytelling, marketers can learn, how consumers resolve these issues in their minds, giving them direction for further marketing acts (Wegner 2002). Since stories have been studied to be the most important factor in sense making in human minds, this should be the main focus when tackling fashion users' paradoxes (Wegner, 2002; Holt, 2002/2004; Escalas & Stern, 2003; de Kleer, 2019; Niinimäki, 2019).

Providing clear stand on controversial issues, through narrative context, is often a more effective way to reach audience than through pure analytics or data (Conick, 2018; McCoy, 2019). Firstly, people are studied to learn the information through stories better than with factual based content, making the message more impactful and memorable (Escala & Stern, 2003; Holt, 2004; Hiltunen, 2002; Fournier 1998). An effective way of delivering messages to consumers is

therefore to give them narrative context that either has characters or overall myths, that enables them to make sense of their values. If a consumer receives a content full of attention grabbing and easy to identify with archetypes, they tend to see it as an answer to their current incidents and are more tempted to receiving the brand's message. (Escalas & Stern 2003; Wertime, 2002; Delgadillo & Escalas, 2004; Solomon, 1988).

A good example of this is the current trend of veganism. This has not only made choice of fashion item harder for vegan consumers themselves, but also gives headache to fashion houses. There is a constant battle between offering leather products or faux material. On one hand one can argue leather to be better in terms of quality and luxury status, and on the other hand some might see it as a murder and therefore as an unethical choice, making the brand seem careless (de Klerk, 2019). This kind of situations can be cleared by giving consumers stories that entail values of sustainability and an explanation of their choice (Arnould & Wallendorf, 1994; Moore, 1985; Woodside & Chebat, 2001). When content like this is continuous and also implemented in direct conversations with people, little room is left for counter arguments or scandal cases to happen (Conick, 2018; McCoy, 2019). In case of a controversy, such as offering a leather product, the issues no longer offer a platform for bad mouthing, if there is no hiding to it. Making the conflict visible for discussion, negotiations as well as paths of new practices can be done through stories that aim to hear the both sides. This way the brand takes stand on the issues, giving the fashion house a status of activism, which is much appreciated among the consumers of the 21st-centuty (Niinimäki, 2009).

5. Discussion & theoretical implications

The conclusion, that this paper comes to using literature review, support the view that stories have positive impact on individual's relationship with the fashion brand and therefore it can be a useful tool in increasing profitability. The findings in section 4.4 fill an existing research gap by giving managerial implications on storytelling to fashion marketing. The findings in this research suggest that stories need to entail the placement of brands as archetypical icons or myths in order to work effectively in fashion context. These findings complement and extend the research done in the past on this topic, by Holt (2002, 2003), Wegner (2002), Wertheim (2002), Kaiser (2012), Aadaval & Wyer (1998), Donzé & Wubs (2019), Lundqvist, Liljander, Gummerus & van Riel (2012), Marzo & Pilar (2004) and Woodside & Fine (2019). The conclusions also add to related literature (e.g. Crane, 1999; Čiarniene, 2014; Leslie Davis Burns, Kathy K. Mullet and Nancy O. Bryant, 2020; López-Navarro, Miguel & Lozano-Gómez, Cristina, 2014).

Various consumer storytelling research studies argue that brands are identified as archetypical forms and that such archetypes can be best brought to life by the brands via stories (Escalas & Stern, 2003; Wertheim, K., 2002; Delgadillo & Escalas, 2004; Solomon, 1988). They further discuss, that consumers see brands' tangible offerings as a possibility to enact these archetypes, giving them a motive for purchasing. The findings in this research support this view. Conclusions also verify Wegner's (2002) and Holt's (2003) findings on people's fundamental need to tell and create stories in order to make sense of surrounding world and to connect with other.

Papers, discussing fashion marketing and specially consumer behaviors among this industry, provides similar findings and understanding on the motivations behind individual's purchasing decisions as discussed in the section 2.3 (Simmel, 1904; Abdelnour, 2019; Lurie, , 1981; Ronald E. Goldsmith, 1999; Sproles, 1985; Roger, 2019; Donzé & Wubs, 2019; Solomon,

& Douglas, 1985). The consensus among studies conducted during the 21st-century emphasize the role of the customer as well as the importance of shared values between the brand and the consumer. These papers also suggested, that the modern consumers appreciate immediacy, transparency and/or sustainability as main brand values (Woodside, 2008; McKinsey, 2020; Heuer, Brettel & Kemper, 2015; Cartier, 2013; López-Navarro, Miguel & Lozano-Gómez, Cristina, 2014; De Klerk, Kearns & Redwood, 2019, Entwistle, 2015; Easy, 2009).

By drawing information from both fashion marketing and storytelling papers, the research forms consensus, in the section 4.4., on the most effective ways these two areas can be matched. In addition to the studies, example cases (Nike, Gucci, Balmain, the Global Empathy Index 2015) supports the findings- storytelling can at its best be an effective tool in triggering fashion consumption.

Several previous studies on consumption patterns within fashion market focus on the main values modern consumers have. In addition, consumer storytelling research papers provide multiple suggestions on the benefits of storytelling as a marketing tool. However, they both are often limited to the idea or theoretical side of the findings and don't provide managerial implications on, how this should be done in practice. By drawing findings from papers researching storytelling's impact on human mind and the literature discussing the new issues fashion marketers are facing in the 21st-century, this paper can provide new insight by giving suggestions on, how to effectively use narrative content in fashion marketing.

6. Conclusion, limitations & future research

The objective of this research is to give guidelines on, how to effectively use the success factors of storytelling in order to create meaningful and impactful fashion marketing acts. This research provides guidance through the following accomplishments.

Firstly, the findings suggest that the main consumption motives in the fashion industry include values such as immediacy, sustainability, heritage and transparency (McKinsey, 2020; Godart, 2012; Kaiser, 2012; Fionda & Moore, 2009; Morely & McMahon, 2011, Niinimäki, 2009). These create the base value proposition brands should use in their stories in order to create deeper and therefore often more long-lasting connections with their consumers. (Woodside, 2008; McKinsey, 2020; Heuer, Brettel, Kemper, 2015; Cartier, 2013; López-Navarro, Miguel & Lozano-Gómez, Cristina, 2014).

Second, storytelling used in digital environment may help to reach the 21st-century consumers more time and cost effectively and to create better connections with them through compelling narrative content. Stories used in digital platforms require attention grabbing content and continuity. This is the effective way to stand out of the mass of information. In addition, findings suggest that providing individuals with constant stimuli, increases their engagement with the brand and eventually leads to increased revenues and brand status (Dessart , Veloutsou & Morgan-Thomas, 2015; Paul J, 2015; Andjelic, 2015; Čiarniene, 2014).

Thirdly, storytelling can be used in resolving consumer paradoxes, by making the conflicting issues visible for discussion, negotiations and possible new actions. The fashion industry is seen as market with multiple conflicting issues, which brings often difficulties for marketers on, how to take stand on controversial issues (McKinsey, 2020; Kaiser, 2012). Studies suggest that fashion brands should indeed take stand on social issues and stories provide a subtle but still impactful way of doing this (Conick, 2018; McCoy, 2019). Stories play an important

role in sensemaking and therefore using them can help consumers resolve conflicting issues in their minds with the help of archetypes and events they can relate to (Wegner, 2002; Holt, 2002; de Kleerck, 2019; Niinimäki, 2019). In addition, findings suggest that controversial situations in fashion context can be effectively cleared by giving consumers stories that entail stand on the conflicting values and an explanation of brand's stand (Arnould & Wallendorf, 1994; Moore, 1985; Woodside & Chebat, 2001). This way fashion houses can gain consumer attraction in the 21st-century, where transparency and acting on sociocultural issues are seen as characteristic of a desirable brand (Niinimäki, 2009; Kaiser, 2012; McKinsey, 2020).

It is worth noticing, that this research has a few limitations which should be considered when evaluating the credibility and universality of the results. Firstly, the methodology used in this paper is literature review. Considering the nature of the subject- storytelling's impact on consumer's fashion behavior in fashion context- empirical study should be conducted. This would be useful addition to help authenticate the findings of this paper through various experiments and observations. In addition, it would benefit the research done in this area by providing better understanding of the changing dynamics in the fashion industry. For this reason, future research should be conducted in this area.

Second, the amount of studies used in this paper is limited and it may miss some information provided by other papers. Greater amount of literature across the globe should be included, if wanting to generalize the findings in broader context. Future research could address this issue by studying for example specific groups of consumers among fashion industry based on either demographic or geographic segmentation variables. By then combining the findings from multiple specific studies, more comprehensive results could be reached.

Thirdly, the complexity of this topic is evident by a variety of variables and conditions within the industry. The complexity creates barriers for the research. For example, consumers can be divided into multiple segments among fashion industry and among each of these segments, individuals have different motives for fashion consumption. As a result, storytelling should be implemented to each group with different focus point in mind. In addition, there is a widespread inconsistent use of terminology throughout both the fashion industry and consumer storytelling research, as the studies range from the 20th-century to this day, creating added limitations to the interpretation of these papers.

Finally, the current changes occurring in the economic, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, are already bringing new shifts into consumers' demand in the fashion industry and will probably change their needs and wants even more in the future, which should be considered when implementing storytelling into fashion marketing strategy (McKinsey, 2020). This proves that due to the fast-phased nature of the fashion industry, there is a need for continuous research of this market in order to extend or update current papers and to provide new insights into this research.

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